



Vermont Cheese Council Annual Meeting

Saturday, February 1st, 2014
Cloudland Farm, Pomfret

Welcome - Jeremy Stephenson, President

33 Cheesemaking members in attendance. Meeting started 9:30.

Remarks - Paul Costello, Vermont Council on Rural Development
Paul spoke about the role of CRD in bringing people and groups together to talk about and plan for Vermont's future. 'Working landscape' was top priority for Vermonters as identifying feature of the state, and cheese is a major part of the working landscape.

However we have the huge issue of losing infrastructure over the past 20 years – dairy farms, lumber mills. There is a tremendous opportunity to identify and brand Vermont as the center for rural economic opportunity for young people. There is also a unique culture in Vermont where businesses collaborate to build stronger regional systems, as well as compete.

There is a new movement in VT higher education to work together on food systems learning. University leaders want to attract new generations of students with an emphasis on 'Vermont as a classroom' i.e. building programs between schools so students can get varied learning opportunities. Cheesemakers may be able to help with and benefit from this effort, and VCC will stay in the loop with VCRD.

2013 Review

Festival Report – Lisa Battilana spoke about planning for the 2014 Festival. Festival date is Sunday July 20th.

There are many changes occurring on the Festival planning committee (such as PR and design people, Shelburne Farms event coordinator), so much work to transition and catch new folks up to speed. Ticket sales were ~220 less than previous year, but logistics work on crowding and air flow made for a well received event.

Goal is to sell out tickets with an early bird special and prize



drawing. Early stages of programming planning. Will continue with one ticket price for all seminars/tastings.

Discussion about Festival timing – keep in summer vs. a fall Festival? Group show of hands slanted towards keeping as a summer event. Also discussion around how to tie in with ACS in Rhode Island in 2015.

Video project Report – Rachel reported on history of project, and outcomes of videos. Finished videos are embedded on VCC members' sites. There is raw footage also available for those cheese makers who were filmed, to have for editing. Interest in using video more using VCC funding in the future.

Membership/website report – Tom reviewed website hits – peaks in summer, and overall visits up from 2013. Membership steady at 42. There are about 20 cheesemaking milk handlers licenses who are not yet part of the VCC – Tom will try to contact them, as well as Associate members. Tom also introduced himself as the new ED, and his history in the Vermont food world including stints as chefs and working around cheesemakers.

Treasurers report – Jeannine presented 2013 budget and actuals with some receivables and expenses still outstanding. Total 2013 income at \$134,779, expenses at \$167,822 but some state funds may be coming. Checking account current balance is \$165,170.

Tax status and 2014 budget – Jeremy reviewed history of taxes not being filed last two years due to communication breakdowns. 2012 tax year return was filed on time. There is still an issue with the IRS over revocation of non-profit status, but our accountant feels this will not be an issue of losing out status.

2014 budget was presented with increases in both income and expenses, showing a \$5k net income. Budget passed as proposed.

2014 Initiatives

Open forum - what kinds of programming & events do members want to see in 2014 and the future? Ideas from members included:

- Working with other ag groups in Vermont
- Upgrading website & social media platforms*
- Budget 3 years out
- More technical assistance around food safety and cheesemaking***
- Member updates around cheese classes that are happening



- Peter Dixon volunteered to head up educational initiatives
- VCC could have list of support names for marketing/PR
- Website as 'one stop shop' for resources
- Meeting minutes communicated better to general membership*
- Making sure Cheese Trail is active
- Working with retailers on VT cheese education*
- Logo/sticker for Vermont cheeses like Seal of Quality
- Cheese recipes on website
- Open house cheese day or weekend esp. for those not on Trail
- Communication with regulatory agencies

Executive Committee Elections

Rachel Schaal was thanked for her years of work for the VCC. Motion for bylaw exception amendment made to nominate non-principal member as officer, in order to nominate Lisa Battilana as President. Discussion around what bylaws say about Executive Committee makeup and membership. Feelings expressed that officers should be cheesemakers, but also that a wider net of cheese industry professionals is good for the EC. Motion vote was 13 in favor to 10 opposed, but did not carry a 2/3 majority to pass. Vince Razionale was nominated for President, as well as Stan Biassini.

Officers nominations and votes included:

Vince Razionale & Stan Biassini – President. Vince (Jasper Hill Farm) elected

Rachel Schaal (Parish Hill Creamery) – VP

Michael Lee (Twig Farm) - Treasurer

Anne Doe (Boston Post Dairy) – Secretary

Angela Miller (Consider Bardwell Farm) – Advisor

Lisa Battilana (Woodstock Farmers Market) - Advisor

Meri Spicer (Grafton Village Cheese) - Advisor

Stan Biassini (Mt Mansfield Creamery) – Advisor

Jay Kerner and Andrew Kannler (Black River Produce and Provisions) – proxy votes

Lunch

Roundtable discussion –

'What are we learning about milk for cheese?'



John Barlow, UVM Department of Animal Science
Kevin Kouri, Poulin Grain

We had a discussion about recent research and experiences around producing quality milk for cheesemaking, including feeding animals well and managing mastitis and animal health. Both speakers had much helpful information to share on these topics.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:30.

Respectfully submitted

Nat Bacon, Secretary